



Good Bridges

Make Good Neighbors

By WILLIAM J. PERRY

A small group of U.S. soldiers is serving in a peacekeeping operation in the jungles on the border between Ecuador and Peru after both nations agreed to end their boundary dispute at the negotiating table rather than on the battlefield. The agreement to stop fighting and demilitarize the border was brokered by Brazil which along with Argentina, Chile, and the United States provided troops to monitor the agreement.

This is only one example of the historic opportunities that now exist for the nations of the Western Hemisphere to build stable bridges of communication, cooperation, and trust that increase the security of our neighborhood. Times have changed. The hemisphere has embarked on a new era of democracy, peace, and stability.

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Most previous Secretaries of Defense looked south and saw only security problems. When I look south today, I find security partners. Just ten years ago, nearly half the nations of the region were ruled by military dictatorships. Now all but Cuba are democ-

racies led by elected governments. Nearly every part of the Americas is free. The end of the Cold War offers a chance to consolidate these many democratic gains. With a decline in insurgency and increase in bilateral and multilateral cooperation, peace dominates the region.

Negotiation has replaced confrontation. All parts of the hemisphere are reaching out to one another as even traditional enemies become trading partners. In the process, the Americas have been

linked in a considerable and expanding economy. The gross hemispheric product will exceed \$13 trillion by the end of the decade. Thanks to this growth, per capita income in Latin America is expected to increase by a fifth—a success that promises to ease poverty and raise living standards to enhance political stability. If these trends continue, including new agreements on free trade, Latin America will be a larger U.S. trading partner than Western Europe.

With such a growing harmony of interests, the Americas have an unparalleled opportunity to create an era of trust, cooperation, and unity, and a community of free, prosperous, and secure nations. As President Clinton has indicated, “We’ve arrived at a moment of very great promise and great hope for the Western Hemisphere.”

That promise and hope were conspicuous in December 1994 at the Summit of the Americas in Miami. This was the first gathering of hemispheric leaders in more than a generation and the

The Honorable William J. Perry is Secretary of Defense.

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Bridge of the Americas
over Panama Canal.

U.S. Navy (Johnny D. Biviera)

first of exclusively democratically-elected leaders. The participants explored a number of common interests—democracy, trade, technology, and environment—and outlined an action plan on the economic and political future. Because a meeting of freely elected heads of government would not have been possible during the Cold War, the summit was a notable political symbol; but it was also significant for its political substance. The nations agreed that the future would be built on strong democratic institutions, sustainable development, and free trade. Moreover, they agreed to develop a Free Trade Area of the Americas to ensure that goal.

After the summit, which concentrated on political and economic matters, the governments also recognized the need to cooperate on security matters. Creating closer links among defense and military establishments and committing to uphold the democratic process will bolster democracy, stability, and economic reform. Specifically,

defense and military links will help address threats to peace and stability, promote hemispheric cooperation, and foster the growth of military institutions that serve and benefit democracy. As the first step in further cooperation, the defense leaders of the 33 democratic nations present accepted an invitation from the United States to attend the first Defense Ministerial of the Americas in Williamsburg, Virginia, last summer.

Williamsburg—where Jefferson, Washington, and Madison drafted the framework for the first democracy in the hemisphere two centuries ago—was the perfect site for this historic meeting. Among stately halls and cobblestone streets, the ministers met to sketch out a framework to secure democracy throughout the hemisphere. They

set realistic goals and did not endeavor to resolve the hemisphere's security challenges. Rather, they focused on ways in which defense establishments could build ties. Such personal relations are invaluable to communication, trust, and cooperation among nations—sometimes even more than written agreements or formal relationships.

While this meeting was held in and hosted by the United States, it was not a "U.S." event. Instead, it was an American event in the broadest meaning of the term, with North, Central, and South America as well as the Caribbean participating equally. In the same sense, the meeting did not operate under a U.S.-imposed agenda. It was guided by an itinerary collaboratively developed following discussions among all the nations throughout the previous year. This mutually accepted agenda set the right tone because it reflected a democratic process and demonstrated, in a practical sense, the best way to secure and advance democracy in the hemisphere.

The agenda consisted of three major areas—transparency and confidence building, defense cooperation, and the role of the military in democratic societies. Each is important to post-Cold War hemispheric security.

Transparency and confidence-building mean being open about defense plans, programs, and policies. They involve sending soldiers to each other's military schools and holding combined training exercises to reinforce cooperation and trust. Openness is an unusual concept when applied to defense because the art of war involves secrecy and surprise while the art of peace involves the opposite. Openness about defense matters reduces chances that nations will arm and act out of fear of the unknown. It fosters trust between the military and public, a key ingredient in a democracy.

The second area of discussion was defense cooperation. While the hemi-

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sphere is generally peaceful, sporadic security issues do arise. Among them are illicit drugs that poison communities, threaten societies, and undermine national security. Working cooperatively on such challenges is an effective and efficient use of our resources. In the process, nations and militaries can learn from one another and about one another, as well as how to perform better in cooperative operations.

The third area of attention was the proper role of armed forces in 21st century democracies. In varying degrees, defense and military establishments face major changes in reducing their forces and reconfiguring for missions in the next century. In the same way the Armed Forces have seen their strength and spending reduced over the last ten years and are reexamining their roles and missions in the post-Cold War era, many militaries in the region are making fundamental changes in force structure, plans, policies, or even in the way they relate to democratic governments.

At the ministerial meeting defense establishments were urged to share experiences and ideas on how to approach change and forge stronger ties

between civilian and military institutions. Just as the latter learn more about serving in a democracy, civilian expertise is required in defense and military matters. Similarly, armed forces might contribute to national development in areas such as infrastructure and public works, functioning like the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and National Guard. As agreed in Miami both civilians and the military must protect human rights, and military training can be adapted to reflect that.

Participants at the Williamsburg meeting accomplished more than reaching an agreement on a common agenda. As Jefferson outlined the principles of a new democracy two centuries ago, the defense leaders of this hemisphere outlined six principles to guide regional security relationships into the next century which they called the Williamsburg principles:

- the preservation of democracy as the basis for mutual security
- the critical role of the military in supporting and defending sovereign democratic states
- the respect of the military for democratic authority, constitutional law, and human rights
- the spread of openness in discussing defense programs, policies, and budgets
- the resolution of disputes through negotiated settlements—not military actions
- the need for greater cooperation in peacekeeping and the fight against narcotics.

These principles are truly revolutionary since they represent consensus and commitment on the part of 33 nations to the cause of peace and democracy in the hemisphere. That unity of purpose would not have been possible ten years ago. The precepts are all the more revolutionary because they are already being implemented.

At the meeting, the United States demonstrated its commitment to openness in defense and security matters by announcing a policy of notifying all democratic governments in this hemisphere before holding significant multilateral military exercises in the region. To further underscore the resolve for openness, I distributed copies of the 1995 Department of Defense *Annual Report to the President and the Congress*. This document informs the



Secretary Perry
briefing the press on
July 26, 1995.

country and world about the kind of forces we are building, the rationale for them, and the amount being spent on those forces.

Canada also presented its national defense policy document. And all participants discussed a variety of information-sharing measures, such as standardized reporting to the United Nations on defense expenditures, full participation in the U.N. Register of Conventional Arms, and sharing these reports with the Organization of American States.

There have also been positive results from implementing the commitment at Williamsburg to redress hemispheric conflicts through negotiation. A coalition headed by the United States and joined by many neighbors of Haiti worked with the United Nations to create a stable environment for the safe return of its democratically-elected president and conducting national elections. And the collaboration among Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and the United States played a critical role in the agreement between Ecuador and Peru to demilitarize their border. That agreement and Operation Support Democracy in Haiti set a significant precedent: peacekeeping in the Americas in support of conflict resolution and democracy is more than a principle—it is a reality.

In the area of defense cooperation, we are building on significant

contributions which the region has made to international peacekeeping. For example, 20 countries from this hemisphere support 15 of the 16 current U.N. peace operations around the world. Forces have served together to restore order in both El Salvador and Haiti. Regional militaries have combined for humanitarian hurricane relief efforts. U.S. Reserve forces are getting hands-on training by working with Latin American militaries to build roads, schools, and wells in rural areas. The hemisphere's annual *Unitas* exercises help navies cooperate while other multilateral exercises expand our ability to join together in peacekeeping and counterdrug missions and build interoperability.

Pursuant to the Williamsburg agreements, there will be a full range of combined exercises. Also, Argentina and Canada offered to open more places in their peacekeeping training centers to students from other countries, and the United States proposed expanding education for civilians in national security studies.

Already this year in Santiago, governments of the hemisphere reached accord on military confidence-building and transparency measures. For example, they agreed to give advance notice of military exercises, exchange information on defense policies and doctrine, invite observers from other nations to exercises, and develop border communications. The U.S. Southern Command and the Inter-American Institute of Human Rights co-hosted a conference on human rights training in February 1996, which resulted from discussions in Williamsburg. The guarantor nations to the Ecuador and Peru peace process agreed to extend their border presence through June 1996.

With the support of U.S. Southern Command, a special Spanish-language edition of this JFQ Forum on "The Security of the Americas" is being published simultaneously for distribution by U.S. Military Group commanders throughout the region.

The United States has also participated in improved bilateral activities that serve as a model for cooperation. In October 1995 at the invitation of the Mexican minister of defense, I became the first Secretary of Defense to make an official visit to that country. Since the United States and Mexico have developed closer economic ties under the North American Free Trade Agreement and closer political ties with President Clinton's visit to Mexico, this was another opportunity to build a new bilateral security relationship based on openness, trust, and cooperation.

The U.S.-Mexican security relationship is already underway in several areas, particularly in disrupting narco-trafficking. Beyond that, military-to-military bonds are growing as leaders build working relationships; our navies have begun staff talks; airborne forces have jumped out of each other's aircraft; U.S. officers teach English at Mexican military schools, while Mexican officers teach Spanish at U.S. facilities; and the carrier *USS Kittyhawk* recently received a warm welcome on a port call to Acapulco.

Such bilateral activities will erect a new bridge between Washington and Mexico City. The United States already engages in similar activities with many nations in the hemisphere, including a

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bilateral working group with Argentina and, more recently, with Chile. In March 1996, I became the first Secretary of Defense to visit Venezuela. I am encouraging every hemispheric nation to fully participate in a range of activities, such as more officer exchanges, more multilateral peacekeeping training and exercises, and more cooperation on other real-world missions (such as disaster relief). Nations should develop more defense and military contacts, broader dialogue, and openly share information on everything from defense plans, policies, and priorities to specific missions.



Venezuelan airborne troops.

The nations of the hemisphere can still do much more. To ensure that we do, the defense ministers decided at Williamsburg to develop a process for working together. Just as James Madison created a democratic process for our Republic by drafting the U.S. Constitution, the hemispheric defense leaders developed a process to achieve the six Williamsburg principles, a mechanism the Argentine minister fittingly dubbed the "Williamsburg process." This

procedure is based on dialogue and consensus-building and techniques to energize and consolidate democracies, and extends from formal agreements to personal relationships.

The Defense Ministerial of the Americas laid a foundation for inter-hemispheric defense cooperation. The challenge ahead is to build on that and transform good intentions, good will, and common interests into concrete activities and achievements. The Williamsburg principles must be imbedded in security relationships throughout the hemisphere. Turning them into action will require consistent dialogue and frequent meetings. Argentina volunteered to host the next

ministerial later this year, and defense leaders across the hemisphere are now shaping the agenda for it.

If these activities continue, the defense establishments of the Western Hemisphere may well fulfill the dream of the great Latin American liberator, Simon Bolivar, who spoke of the Americas becoming the greatest region on earth: "... not so much by virtue of their area or their wealth, but by their freedom." The United States has a tremendous stake in Bolivar's dream becoming reality and a major opportunity to advance it by building bridges with neighbors throughout the Americas. The poet Robert Frost suggested that "Good fences make good neighbors," but this does not always hold true. Instead, when neighbors share common ideals and concerns, and work together to achieve goals, it is good bridges that usually make good neighbors.

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